

o FALL 2010

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ WELCOME1
- ▶ BALLAST WATER SCIENTIFIC PANEL ACTIVITIES1
- ▶ VESSEL DISCHARGES WEBSITE UPDATED2
- ▶ REPORT TO CONGRESS AVAILABLE2
- ▶ UPCOMING LISTENING SESSION2
- ▶ VESSEL MORATORIUM EXTENDED2



NPDES Vessels Program *Quarterly*

NAVIGATING THE EPA REGULATED VESSELS UNIVERSE

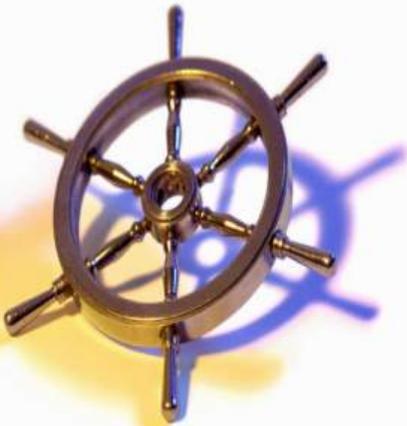
WELCOME

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched this quarterly newsletter to provide periodic updates to the public about the EPA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) vessels program. Each newsletter will discuss new information, such as upcoming meetings, publications, or activities that relate to the NPDES vessels program.

As authorized by the Clean Water Act, the NPDES permit program controls water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants into waters of the United States. Vessels are defined as point sources under the Clean Water Act. EPA develops and manages the Vessel General Permit (VGP) for discharges incidental to the normal operation of vessels as part of its NPDES vessels program. The current VGP expires on December 19, 2013; a new VGP will be issued before that time.

For more information about the vessels program including the VGP, please visit <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels>.

For questions or concerns about the VGP, please e-mail EPA at CommercialVesselPermit@epa.gov.



Ballast Water Scientific Panel Activities

The current VGP requires ballast water exchange, saltwater flushing, and/or other best management practices to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

EPA, along with the U.S. Coast Guard, have commissioned EPA's Science Advisory Board (SAB) to evaluate the status of existing ballast water treatment technologies and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review approaches to setting

organism-based ballast water discharge standards. Information from these reports may help inform EPA in developing ballast water effluent limits and related requirements for the next VGP.

EPA expects these studies to be completed by late Spring 2011. Once EPA receives the reports, they will be made available to the public at <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels>.

Ballast water discharges have the potential to spread aquatic invasive species as water is taken in from one region and discharged into another.

VESSEL MORATORIUM EXTENDED

On July 30, 2010, President Obama signed Public Law 111-215 (Senate Bill S. 3372) to extend an existing moratorium under PL 110-299 from July 31, 2010 to December 18, 2013. The PL 111-215 moratorium exempts all incidental discharges (except ballast water) from commercial fishing vessels and non-recreational vessels under 79 feet in length from having to obtain a Clean Water Act permit. This date coincides with the expiration of EPA's current Vessel General Permit, which covers incidental discharges from larger vessels (greater than 79 feet), and all ballast water discharges regardless of vessel size.

UPCOMING LISTENING SESSION



Date: December 15, 2010

When: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, concluding early if all comments are heard

Where: Room 1153, EPA East, 1201 Constitution Ave NW, Washington DC 20004

Purpose: EPA seeks the views of the interested public on requirements currently listed in the 2008 VGP and any changes or additions recommended for the next VGP. Although the Agency has started research for the next Vessel General Permit, the listening session serves as an additional opportunity for the public to comment or provide relevant information for development of the next VGP. The current permit expires on December 13, 2013.

For More Information, Including Instructions on How to Submit Written Comments: Please read the *Federal Register* notice announcing the listening session at <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels> or at <http://www.regulations.gov> identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2010-0828



Report to Congress Now Available

the NPDES Vessel General Permit. The report finds that some vessel discharges studied may have the potential to impact the aquatic environment and/or human health.

Using a large hypothetical harbor to model the environmental impacts of studied vessel discharges, EPA found that incidental discharges from study vessels would not in and of themselves exceed any National Recommended Water Quality Criterion (NRWQC) in large water bodies. However, since many of the pollutants present in the vessel discharges were at end-of-pipe concentrations that exceeded an

NRWQC, there is the potential for these discharges to affect water quality locally.

Study results and literature reviews indicate that total arsenic and dissolved copper are the most significant water quality concerns for the study vessels as a whole, and that they are more likely than other pollutants to exceed water quality criteria. This is especially true if there are high concentrations of vessels in confined waters, or other sources of pollutants or the receiving water already has high background pollutant concentrations.

For more information, please visit <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/vessels/reportcongress.cfm>

EPA published the *Report to Congress: Study of Discharges Incident to Normal Operation of Commercial Fishing Vessels and Other Non-Recreational Vessels Less than 79 Feet* in August 2010. EPA was required to conduct this study during a two-year moratorium (PL 110-299) that exempted non-recreational vessels less than 79 feet in length and commercial fishing vessels. The study evaluated the impacts of vessel discharges potentially subject to regulation under

VESSEL DISCHARGES WEBSITE UPDATED

The NPDES vessel discharges website located at <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels> was updated in September 2010. EPA has now organized different sections of the site into different pages. It also added approximately 30 frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers.

